

III. SUMMARY OF INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The 1987 State Parks Act defines the purposes of the state parks system. It establishes that:

The State of North Carolina offers unique archaeological, geologic, biologic, scenic and recreational resources. These resources are part of the heritage of the people of this State. The heritage of a people should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.

It further provides that:

Park lands are to be used by the people of this State and their visitors in order to promote understanding of and pride in the natural heritage of this State.

One of the best methods of meeting these purposes is through environmental education. The definition of environmental education as set forth in *The North Carolina Environmental Education Plan* is given below.

Environmental education is an active process that increases awareness, knowledge, and skills that result in understanding, commitment, informed decisions, and constructive action to ensure stewardship of all interdependent parts of the earth's environment.

Eno River State Park is an important provider of environmental education for public and private schools, summer camps, youth and adult groups and clubs, and the general public. Through the Environmental Education Learning Experience (ELEE), *Living Water*, participants gain an awareness of the park's resource, the Eno River, and are asked to make informed decisions based on their newly acquired skills. The demand for environmental education at the park is increasing. As the population in the Triangle region continues to grow, that demand will increase many fold.

The primary interpretive themes for Eno River State Park, in priority order, are river basin ecology, cultural history, wildlife habitats and corridors, and unique geologic features.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

River Basin Ecology

The Eno River watershed is part of the Neuse River Basin. Program topics in this theme area include biological diversity, habitat diversity, and water quality. Interpretive programs focus on the aquatic life in the Eno River watershed and how this life serves as an indicator of water quality. Through environmental education programs such as the park's ELEE, park staff encourage thoughtful stewardship by helping participants realize their effect on water quality. Due to the popularity of river ecology programs, park staff would like to expand the current

EELE to include more grade levels and more diverse activities on water quality.

Cultural History

This theme highlights the area's human history with emphasis on the colonial period and late 1800s – in particular, mills, mill sites and milling families on the Eno River. Other historical programs deal with agriculture, African-American, roads and fords, and American Indian groups such as the Eno as seen through artifacts found in the river basin.

Wildlife Habitats and Corridors

As development continues in Orange county, few examples of large contiguous forest remain. When habitat is fractured by roads, shopping malls, and subdivisions, many wildlife species – such as the black bear – are unable to meet their needs for food, water, shelter, and space. Without forested corridors or travelways, wildlife populations become disconnected and genetically unstable. Interpretive programs in this theme area demonstrate how the park provides large blocks of forested habitat as well as corridors that connect diverse populations.

Unique Geologic Features

Lying within the Carolina Slate Belt, the park contains many unique geologic features, such as old volcanic mud flows at Cates Falls and spherulites–crystal clusters in a rhyolite lava flow–along the Bobbitt's Hole Trail. The falls and rapids in the Eno River are caused by metavolcanic rocks that are very resistant to erosion. With the addition of the Occoneechee Mountain Natural Area and nearby quarries, park staff have increased opportunities for geological programming.

SECONDARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Secondary themes for the park support and embellish the primary themes; they are listed below.

- Astronomy and other night programs
- Area wildlife (birds, herps, insects, mammals)
- Wildflowers – local species, rare species and exotic plants
- Nature photography
- Park history
- Recreation - fishing, canoeing, hiking, backpacking, etc.
- Park resources and management; e.g., southern pine beetles, Hurricane Fran, floods, fire, protection of rare and critical habitats, water quality and quantity, etc.
- Succession of tree and shrub communities